

Biomass Harvest Guidelines Sub-Group Meeting
DNRC Forestry Division Headquarters, Missoula
April 28, 2010
Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Jeff Schmalenberg-DNRC Soil Scientist, Todd Morgan-UM BBER, Steve Hayes-UM BBER, Len Broberg-Sierra Club, Julia Altemus-DNRC Forest Policy, Rob Ethridge-DNRC Forestry Division, Julie Kies-DNRC Biomass Utilization, Martin Twer-MSU Extension Forestry, Roger Ziesak-DNRC Forest Practices, Angela Farr-USFS, Meredith Webster-USFS Soil Scientist. By phone: Brian Sugden-Plum Creek, Paul McKenzie-Montana Tree Farm, Joe Kerkvliet-The Wilderness Society

Minutes

Julie reported the sub-groups proposed modifications to the Water Quality BMPs would be presented to the state BMP Working Group for their approval/adoption at their next meeting on 4/29/2010.

Group members reported on action items from last meeting:

Contact other state DNR offices to gauge their harvest activities and give MT a better sense of what we might anticipate.

Rob and Joe reported on their conversations with WA, OR and ID. Their notes are included in the meeting materials on the web. A few highlights: ID and OR appear to be relying on their existing Forest Practices, deeming them adequate to include biomass. Idaho is interesting in that their Forest Practices Act and Slash Law are administered by two different bureaus. Forestry Bureau manages non-commercial slash under the FP Act, while the Fire Bureau manages commercial slash/logs delivered to mills under their Slash Law. ID DNR recognizes the weaknesses in that and is looking at how to reorganize this.

Angela mentioned a biomass energy project by Avista. Discussion about common barrier of not being able to get guarantee of long-term supply from federal lands. Len B mentioned Canada's land management and how the province hands management of some public lands over to private timber companies, they have longer leases, and mandates for cuts. Some similarity to USFS Sustained Yield.

Joe gave overview of WA biomass activities stating there was a mandate to requiring the state revisit their Forest Practices law as it relates to private forests. WA DNR is not governed by the FP Act, they've been asked to revisit their guidelines. Question asked regarding long-term supply contracts in WA and whether/not the contract was with the user or the harvester. Joe, don't know.

Rob asked for update from Angela on the DOC co-gen feasibility studies. Angela reported that NW Energy and the mills received a draft of the executive summary yesterday. Don't know status of Porterbench Energy study. Document that will be open to the public will describe a prototype mill assessment and talk about appropriate sizing/scaling. NW Energy and MCDC will present at next May 6 EQC meeting. Final product expected to be complete May 15.

Review biomass harvest guidelines from other states to inform development of MT's

Julie and Julia reported that they have compiled biomass harvest guidelines from Minnesota, Maine, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin but have not had a chance to look at in-depth yet. They will also refer to the summary paper of guidelines published by Forest Guild. **Julie will post those links on the website. The sub-group is encouraged to review these.** Todd Morgan stated he knows Alexander Evans,

one of the authors of that paper and would be willing to invite him to present to us if they group had interest.

Compile most current reference materials related to biomass harvest

Julie provided a draft listing of references/publications and asked group to add or take away from it as they saw fit. Members were asked to email publications/links to them to Julie. Publications need to be peer reviewed for inclusion. We want to be sure to have good, rigorous reports and data to present. Todd mentioned having more reports on the financial/economics. Martin mentioned having more to contribute. Angela suggested inclusion of carbon balance/misconceptions publication out of Europe.

Explore considerations for soils

Jeff S. provided a list of potential soil considerations as they relate to biomass/timber harvest. This list is shared in the meeting materials. Recognize that this list mimics current BMPs in timber sales. There was discussion about some of these items being cost-prohibitive and/or too prescriptive. Jeff, agreed we don't want to be prescriptive, but rather these are a rough outline of considerations that might be used as tools in the tool box for different contracts. Angela asked about the soil risk rating maps and would that be of value—especially for use by NIPF landowners. Discussion about working with NRCS soil maps and something of a risk matrix. Discussion about how that map could be misinterpreted/misused as it will provide too much blanket mapping of areas when soil types/harvest conditions will vary across a harvest site/landscape, etc. Group decided to not move forward with that soil mapping at this time.

Review MT's existing voluntary wildlife guidelines and suggest revisions

Len B provided edits to current Voluntary Wildlife Guidelines for SMZs publication as a starting point. Presented edits as things to think about. These are included in the meeting materials. Highlights of suggested edits: add considerations for smaller trees, denning habitat, ground nesting bird species, habitat connectivity. Denning habitat refers to that for mammals such as pine marten, fisher, lynx, black bear, raccoons, porcupines, etc. Discussion about using vertebrates as an umbrella for invertebrates. Joe raised question about who/how will we incorporate guidelines for other biodiversity, rare plants and weeds. Discussion about how this was a starting point and we'll go from here.

Rob suggested we create a strawman guidelines document incorporating these elements and go from there. **Julie volunteered to draft the strawman after reviewing format of other state guidelines.**

Todd raised question about is there any evidence from concerned population that biomass harvest is or will be different than traditional harvest operations/impacts. Joe, there are currently harvests in WA where they are revisiting old harvest sites to collect slash. Todd, that is likely happening where there is slash piled at a centralized landing, not dispersed across the site/forest floor.

Meredith, we need to draft these guidelines thinking about tradeoffs.

Joe asked who will be the author of these biomass harvest guidelines—DNRC, other? Rob, I imagine this will be a collaborative effort with all the member affiliations having authorship.

Action Items:

- Julie will draft strawman of guidelines document for review at next meeting
- Group will send peer-reviewed research publications of interest to Julie for inclusion on web/materials
- Next meeting: Julie will send out doodle scheduler for day in late May/early June